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**INCLUSIVE AND RESOURCE CENTER IN THE STRUCTURE OF A HIGHER  
EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENT**



### **Annotation**

The Inclusive and Resource Center (hereafter referred to as the Center) is a new institution in the educational structure of Ukraine. Its main task is: provision of the right of children with special educational needs from the age of 2 to 18 to obtain pre-school and general secondary education. Instead, the right to obtain quality higher education by people with psychophysical developmental disorders after they are 18 is still not provided. In order to solve this problem an appropriate Center was formed at Ternopil National Pedagogical University. The article analyses the experience and main components of this structure functioning.

**Key words:** inclusive education, inclusive and resource center, university, higher education of Ukraine.

### **1. Theoretical substantiation of research theme**

The reform of the education sector in Ukraine involves the introduction of an inclusive form of education. Nowadays, the regulatory and legal documentation regulating the inclusive process in preschool and secondary education has already been improved, and corresponding changes have been developed in vocational education. At the same time, higher education lacks not only legal regulation, but also methodological recommendations for the introduction of professional training, including the pedagogical one, and the creation of an appropriate inclusive educational environment. Thus, there is a contradiction, which lies in the fact that higher educational establishments are not ready to meet the needs of society in providing high-quality educational services to people with disabilities and other specific needs, as well as to train pedagogical staff for work in conditions of inclusion.

Since the research problem is not only relevant, but also generally new for education sector, we were unable to find previous scientific research on the functioning of an inclusive and resource center on the basis of a higher education establishment.

The purpose of the article is to identify and analyze the capabilities of the inclusive and resource center (hereinafter referred to as the Center) as a separate structural unit of the university in the implementation of the principles of inclusive education.

### **2. Formation and functioning of the Center**

After the adoption of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 545 dated July 12, 2017 "On Approval of the Regulations on the Inclusive and Resource Center" and new Law of Ukraine "On Education" No. 2145-VIII dated September 05, 2017 in Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatyuk National Pedagogical University (hereinafter – TNPU) a preparation for the implementation of Article 20 of the Law on inclusive education has begun [3, 5]. As a result, since February 2018 a separate structural unit of the University "Inclusive and Resource Center" (hereinafter – the Center) has been organized. The purpose of the Center's activities is to improve conditions for students with disabilities and other educational needs to get access to quality education and other services at the university; to support the parents of applicants, educators, the public and to promote the introduction of inclusive education in the region through the implementation of the Center's functions [2].

#### *2.1. Tasks and functions of the Center*



The purpose of the Center is concretized in twenty-six tasks specified in the Regulations, aimed at working with students and their parents/guardians, teachers, educators of the region. The tasks include: studying, generalizing and introducing into the pedagogical practice of domestic and world advanced pedagogical experience, introducing inclusive and special education, promoting the relevant activities of state and public organizations, parental associations, charitable foundations to support inclusion; organization and conduct of scientific researches, scientific conferences, seminars on the problems of inclusive education; development and implementation of disciplines related to inclusive education in the educational process of the university; organization of work to improve the competence of parents regarding the peculiarities of development, education, upbringing of children with developmental disabilities or other special needs, their participation in the educational activities of their children; initiation of issues on the creation of conditions and compliance of the university space and its adjacent areas with the principles of architectural and environmental accessibility; creation and functioning of a resource room on the basis of the university; promoting the creation of an association of students with disabilities and special educational needs; cooperation with other thematic public associations, etc. [2].

The main functions of the Center are: *informational* (providing families, teachers, interested persons with relevant information on the state's social and educational policy (normative and legal documents at the national and regional level), programs and services to support persons with disabilities and special needs, the latest educational and rehabilitation technologies, the best experience in the field of inclusive and special education; identification, support, registration of students with disabilities; co-ordination of cooperation with global, national, regional and local institutions in order to provide students (disciples) with disabilities with access to quality education, self-development, formation of vital competencies, employment, and exchange of experience; distribution of information on the resources to ensure the educational and rehabilitation needs of children and youth with violations of mental and physical development in places of their residence); *advisory* (providing consultations to interested subjects of interaction on the peculiarities of development, educational and rehabilitation needs, creation of proper conditions for the organization of inclusive education of student youth (disciples) with different types of violations of mental and physical development; advising teachers, who work with disciples and students with disabilities, consultancy on the peculiarities of their education, training, organization of psychological and pedagogical support of educational activities at the place of education, providing educational, methodological materials, assistance in developing an individual development program); *navigating* (providing assistance to parents in solving the issues of obtaining quality education by their children who have violations in psycho-physical development regarding their educational needs; organization of legal support and support of families, if necessary, defending the rights of the child to receive qualitative and accessible education by clarifying the legal possibilities of parents (or those who replace them); obtaining additional consultations, referring to authorities providing medical and social services, legal informing; identifying and gaining access to the existing sources of assistance and services, providing information on their location); *coordinating* (organization, consolidation, and interdepartmental coordination of the activities of subjects of partnership in providing services to students (disciples) with special educational needs, using rehabilitation activities aimed at restoring physical, mental and social level of their lives activities in order to promote integration into society); *educational* (carrying out activities to improve the professional competence of university teachers; organization of workshops, lectures, practical seminars for educators on problems of inclusive education; creation of conditions for students to undergo training in an inclusive institution, obtaining experience of interaction with children and adults with disabilities during their collective events); *adaptation and modification* (adaptation and improvement of all components of an inclusive educational environment: architectural space, orientation in it and movement, teaching materials and tools, technical support, communication links, etc.).

### 2.3. The main subjects of interaction of Center



The main subjects of interaction and provision of services by the Center are: students and their parents/guardians, university teachers, educators of other educational institutions, representatives of inclusive and resource centers of the region, representatives of public organizations. Psychological, pedagogical and social support for students relates to the issues of creating conditions for their quality education and the use of all educational services provided by the university. Special attention is given to students with disabilities and other needs.

Cooperation with university teachers includes: formation of inclusive competencies among teachers, expansion of the contents of educational disciplines in the field of inclusive education and pedagogy, adaptation and modification of educational material, expansion of forms and means for education by students with different opportunities.

Interaction with teachers and assistants of preschool, general secondary, specialized, vocational education is aimed at increasing their inclusive competence, studying and generalizing existing experience, providing scientific and methodological services (reviewing programs, methodological literature or joint production of them); conducting collective events for children and young people, as well as creating conditions for students to undergo training, conducting an audit regarding the accessibility of an educational institution to all categories of the population.

The considerable experience of work with children and adults with disabilities has been accumulated in public organizations. Cooperation with them allows the Center to study and adapt it to educational programs, as well as to attract students to collective events, in order to form their respective outlook and skills to interact with people with different nosologies. Instead, members of these organizations are able to enrich their social experience and professional orientation of its members. Thus, a wide range of relations of the Center allows implementing the stated objectives in the Regulations governing its activities. Additionally, the Center's Regulation also defines a list of Associated Members: parents, legal representatives of a child, disciple or university student with a disability; specialists from other industries who are not employees of the university; representatives of state and municipal authorities; domestic and foreign representatives with experience in the implementation of inclusive education, providing comprehensive assistance to persons with disabilities and their families [2].

#### 2.4. Principles of activity and resource provision of the Center

The main principles of the Center's activities are: *scientific* (grounding on the latest scientific achievements in the field of inclusion and other human sciences); *confidentiality and observance of ethical norms* (keeping secret, non-disclosure of any individual information without the consent of the person it concerns; grounding on the ethical standards in interaction with various categories of persons, who are participants of the inclusive process); *publicity* (informing the participants of the educational process and citizens on the results and current activities); *individualization* (provision of an individual approach to solving the tasks set); *openness* (readiness to cooperate with various state institutions and public institutions); *team approach* (involvement into cooperation and interaction with various specialists, legal representatives of students/ disciples); *resources* (search and attraction of necessary resources (human, financial, material, informational), their effective use); *complexity* (simultaneous implementation of all Center's activities, performance of tasks set); *professional competence* (creation of conditions for the development of professional (including – inclusive) competencies of the Center staff); *the priority of qualitative professional training* of future teachers and lecturers in the conditions of the university.

The Center plays an important role in initiating modifications and adaptations of the University's educational space. Before that, the Center conducts an audit of the accessibility and needs of the subjects of the educational process and provides relevant recommendations to the university administration. So, as of today, employees of the TNPU Center argued the need to adapt the architectural and informational space for people with visual impairment.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the staffing schedule of the Center should include a list of all the names and positions of employees necessary for the implementation of tasks. Qualification requirements determine that the activities of the Center are provided by scientific and pedagogical



employees who have higher education at least with a master's degree and a diploma in psychological and pedagogical specialties, as well as special, correctional education, defectology and work experience of at least three years in the specialty (for the chief – five years). Staff recruitment also happens on the basis of requests that arise in the process of providing educational services by the university. For example, the arrival of students with hearing impairments who use sign language, provide for the need for sign language specialists. Thus, it is necessary to take into account the necessary resources for the functioning of the Center. N. Sofiy referred to such resources: human, material and financial [6, p. 35]. Adapting them to the realities of the educational reform and the tasks of the Center in the structure of the higher education establishment, we can determine the following resources: *informational* (regulatory documents in the field of inclusive education, teaching materials, the base of diagnostic tools), *human* (presence of a sufficient number of specialists, special teachers), *material* (availability of special teaching aids, correction, rehabilitation, as well as adaptations and modifications); *financial* (financing of the Center's projects, remuneration of employees, increasing of their qualification).

In the course of the Center's activities, the main obstacles in the implementation of the tasks were identified: insufficiently qualified teaching staff, resistance of the teaching staff of the university to inclusive innovation, the regulatory framework for supporting inclusive education in higher education establishments is not developed, lack of financial support, etc. They were partially overcome by popularization of the objective interpretation of the process of inclusive education, creation of conditions for teachers' self-education regarding inclusion in education, introduction of the discipline "Inclusive Education", attraction of grants to support the Center's projects; development and implementation of the Procedure for support persons with disabilities and other low-mobility groups of the population in TNPU; conducting joint activities for students and teachers with people with disabilities [4; 7, p. 284-333].

### Conclusions

Thus, the functioning of the Center on the basis of a higher pedagogical educational establishment provides for a comprehensive work to provide professional support for both students with special educational needs in obtaining a quality education, as well as training of future teachers to work under conditions of inclusive education and a corresponding increase in the competence of the university teaching staff and other teachers of the region.

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